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ALASKA People



Spring 2001

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Upward Mobility

is Alive and Well

For **Shirley Rackley** it was something she wanted for a long time. For **Dorothy Bonds**, it was her chance to break the administrative ranks for a technical position. But for Anchorage Field Manager **Nick Douglas**, it was "doing good business."

On August 8, 1998, Douglas made "it" a reality when he filled two realty specialist jobs under the upward mobility program. The upward mobility program provides certain employees the ability to advance into different or higher level positions. (See *Upward Mobility*).

At that time, Bonds was a budget assistant and Rackley was an electronic records specialist. Douglas says if he had gone nationwide with the positions he is sure he would have been overwhelmed with applications.

After working 16 years for the government, it was a new beginning for Bonds. "Upward mobility positions don't come around that often, so I took a risk because I wanted to do something different," she says. "I waited for 10 years to get this job," says Rackley. At a time when the numbers of federal



Anchorage Field Mgr. Nicholas Douglas is flanked by Dorothy Bonds and Shirley Rackley, realty specialists under the upward mobility program.

workers are in decline, upward mobility, a seldom used program gives employees and others alternate career options.

Douglas says the upward mobility gives talented employees in dead end jobs a chance at other work. He says, "We have the tendency to hire employees at the journeyman level overlooking those who may qualify at a training level or entry level."

Douglas is so pleased with Bonds and Rackley's progress that it's Anchorage Field Office policy that when there are two or more of the same position, a subsequent position will be made upward mobility. He says, "Dorothy and Shirley represent the benefits of the upward mobility program. I encour-

What is Upward Mobility?

The upward mobility program provides advancement and career opportunities to underutilized and underdeveloped employees.

Underdeveloped employees are those who exhibit ability or potential, but do not meet qualifications for entry into positions having advancement potential.

Underutilized employees are in GS-9 or below grades, whose training, education, skills and capabilities are not being fully realized. These employees meet qualification requirements for entry into positions which provide advancement opportunities, but must complete a career development training program to acquire the knowledge, skills, abilities to advance.

To be eligible for upward mobility, applicants must be Department of Interior employees no higher than a GS-9 or the wage grade equivalent, complete a probationary or trial period and have satisfactory performance and conduct.

Upward mobility positions may be established in professional, administrative, technical, clerical or wage grade series.

age every manager to use it!"

The only drawback for Douglas is that the process takes time - it took about 18 months to bring Bonds and Rackley on board.

While Douglas looks for ways to

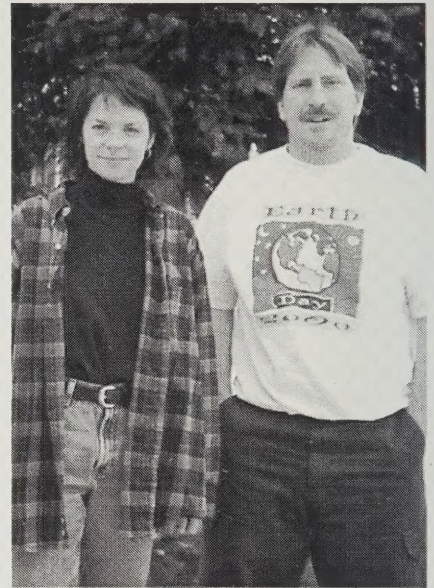
streamline the process, the challenge for Bonds and Rackley was quite different. Rackley says she had to deal with her self confidence, "I am becoming more confident with my actions and decisions." Whereas Bonds says, "I have struggled with reading maps and legal descriptions, things I've never been exposed to before."

Joining the upward mobility ranks at the Anchorage Field Office in 2000 were **Callie Webber** and **Rodney Huffman** both hired by Anchorage Field Office realty group manager **Stu Hirsh**.

Their hiring was a result of Hirsh being in Phoenix for a meeting, when he decided to interview lands school students interested in applying for his new vacant positions. He was able to talk and

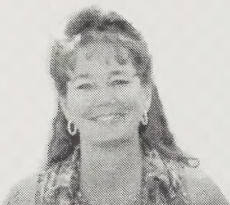
meet with so many candidates that it made the difference in his selections. He concedes that its tough sometimes with half of his staff being in upward mobility positions and still learning certain aspects of their jobs.

Huffman, a former contact representative at the Baker Field Office in Oregon says that he originally planned for a job in Interpretation. But, after settling into a contact representative job he changed his mind. He started learning so much about BLM by working with a geologist and lands people that he changed his career plans. He says, "When the lands program came up with a nationwide announcement for a upward mobility position, I decided to uproot myself and start a new career."



Callie Webber and Rodney Huffman went to the Phoenix lands school together and now work at the Anchorage Field Office.

Shirley Rackley relates her upward mobility experience at the Anchorage Field Office.



Why did you apply for an upward mobility position? It seemed like an exciting career. . . upward mobility jobs are scarce. I was very lucky to be chosen and that one actually came open.

How does the work compare to past positions? My other positions didn't have the responsibility that this job has.

What were your previous positions? I began working for the BLM as a volunteer mail clerk, then mail clerk, records and docket manager to electronics records specialist.

How long have you worked

with BLM? 12 1/2 years. I started during the summer of 1988.

What are your new responsibilities? I work on processing right-of-ways, leases, permits, easements, r & pps, environmental assessments and Native allotments. Last summer I completed Native allotment field examinations and reports and did compliance checks on rights-of-ways. Our trainers spent a lot of time the last two summers with Dorothy and me teaching us the correct way to do field work.

How was your training? On-the-job training has been incredible. My co-workers are the best help anyone could ask for. I spent a lot time in the field with **Karen Collie** and **Lorri Denton** was the other main trainer. Between the two I have learned so much, they have been great teachers. All of the realty staff and each field office employee have been very helpful.

Webber started her career with the Bureau as a recreation co-op student. She says she went the upward mobility route because "several people I respected told me about the program—what it did for them or for people they knew. And I was willing to move and experience yet another aspect of BLM."

The other upward mobility position in the state belongs to **Nancy Whicker**, a realty specialist in the Tok office. Whicker, a former hydrologic technician from Elko, Nevada says that the Lands School upward mobility program provided her an opportunity to upgrade, learn a new career, live in a new place, and see another side of BLM. "I was ready for a change. I chose Tok because it's a small office where you would be exposed to a greater variety of work and experiences," says Whicker.

Douglas remains committed to the upward mobility program and says, "I challenge other managers to create upward mobility positions as a means of giving employees other opportunities for job satisfaction and growth."

Sharon Wilson is known as one of public affairs best. With her flaming red hair and ambling manner, Wilson usually starts her days after 9 a.m. But call the office in the evenings and you'll most likely find her there.

Wilson took a round about way to becoming a public affairs practitioner. The daughter of Wyoming rancher, Wilson grew up in Kennewick, Washington, attended the University of Washington in Seattle and married early. She and her first husband, a military man lived in Texas, Michigan, England, Virginia, Kansas and finally Alaska. She says she was immediately hooked on Fairbanks when she arrived one glorious fall day in September of 1973. "I like the long hot summers and the long cold winters. For a town it size, Fairbanks has all the arts, Shakespeare.... and cultural activities, and so much opportunity for women," she says. During the construction of the Alaska pipeline, she was a career counselor and employment specialist for the Fairbanks Native Association which kept her busy finding employment for Alaska Natives.

By 1978 she was a single mom and the guidance counselor at the Fairbanks District Office for the Young Adult Conservation Corps. The Equal Employment Office was her next stop where she became one of the district's first eeo specialists. She moved into the public affairs office in 1984 and stayed there until April 2001 when she transferred to the BLM's Public Affairs Office in Washington, D.C.

She's been such a fixture in the Northern Field Office (formerly the Fairbanks District) that it will take some time to find someone who knows the issues, the community and can endure the rigors of VIP trip planning like Wilson. She says she stayed in public affairs because, "I love adventures and talking about Alaska."

She recently completed her bachelor's in Journalism after 29 years and she says one of her next adventures will be working towards her Masters.

In the meantime, she'll see where her

career takes her in Washington, D.C. She knows that when she retires that she will return to Fairbanks and live in her home on Moose Mountain where she has the most splendid 260 degree view of Tanana Valley and the Alaska Range.

How long have you lived in Alaska?
27 1/2 years!!

What do you enjoy most about your job? The variety of the work and the total involvement in the organization. Also, living vicariously through the resource specialists.

What is the last book you've read?
The entire series of Kate Shugak mysteries written by Dana Stabenow,



Sharon Wilson
Public Affairs Specialist,
Northern Field Office

of Anchorage. She weaves her stories around real incidents that have happened in Alaska, sets them in familiar Alaska landscapes, brings alive the conflict of Native culture adapting to modern urban society, and shows it all through the eyes of a strong-willed, intelligent, Aleut woman hero, Kate Shugak.

What is your idea of a good time?
Editing an Open File Report and preparing it for publication. Cross-country skiing if I ever had the time.

What was your favorite job? This one is the best; it has kept my interest for 15 years.

If you had one year to live, what would you do? Sell everything, provide for my children's futures (they are adults with their own families), and head for Bali. Scuba dive and drink Mai Tais on the beach.

Name one thing that people would be surprised to know about you. I certified in scuba diving at Whittier in the rain, Memorial Day Weekend 1983. My dive partners were Bob King, now our archeologist at the state office, and Phil Brease, a geologist now working at Denali Park for the National Park Service. We made a great team at the old Fairbanks District!

What does your "ultimate meal" consist of? Probably the best meal I remember was served at Land's End Restaurant in Homer many years ago. Start off with Oysters Rockefeller, Halibut en crote, ' perfectly steamed fresh vegetable medley, accented by Columbia Winery's special "Spirit of Washington" Reisling. Follow dinner with a perfectly executed Creme Brulee' and a Drambouie. Do you see why I have a weight problem?

What bad habit would you like to break? Letting my work projects make me miss my aquaerobics class!

What is your favorite place? The Spit in Homer on a sunny day. Glorious scenery, fresh air, seagulls calling, and no mosquitos.

What is the most important thing you've learned since working for the BLM? To not be afraid of taking risks. I liked those "risk" cards that were handed out a few years ago, that gave you permission to take a risk. BLM managers need to remember that the only people who don't make mistakes are those who never try anything new. I see a more trusting and accepting attitude now over the way things were when I started with BLM in 1981—the change is for the better.



NFO Assoc. Field Mgr Susan Will received the tourism award for the 40-Mile Caribou Team. (l-r) FWS Director Dave Allen; Will; former Spec. Asst. to Secretary Marilyn Heimen; Lt. Governor Fran Ulmer and Spec. Asst., Lands, Alaska Federation of Natives Nelson Angapak.

40-Mile Caribou Team Receives Tourism Award

Although the Fortymile Caribou Herd Management Planning Team is best known for its management of the Fortymile caribou herd, the team was recognized with a tourism award in December by the Alaska Managers Forum. As the recipient of the Innovative Award the team is credited for contributions in making the herd more viable and visible to tourists and the public.

Six years ago when the Fortymile Caribou Management Herd Team was formed, its plan was to increase the numbers of the Fortymile caribou herd and restore the herd to its traditional range. Wildlife viewing is a major attraction for thousands of tourists visiting Alaska. Until recently very few of those visitors driving the Steese Highway had the opportunity to view the magnificent Fortymile Herd due to its decline.

At the turn of the century, the Fortymile caribou herd numbered in the hundreds of thousands and ranged from central Alaska to central Yukon. By the early 1970s the herd had declined to where it

no longer crossed the Yukon River into Canada and could no longer be seen from the Steese Highway.

To boost the herd's numbers, the team realized the survival of caribou calves was dependent on wolf control. Also, the use of lethal wolf control was unacceptable to a majority of the public and especially the tourism community from the lower 48 who had threatened to boycott Alaska over the practice. The boycott could result in a financial loss to the state's coffers. So the team recommended new non-lethal wolf control techniques which met the Governor's criteria for predator control—they were scientifically sound, economically viable and publicly supported. The governor approved the team's recommendation in 1997.

Today the Fortymile caribou herd population has numbers of 35,000, a 60% increase since the team's formation. During the past two years, the herd is being seen in great numbers along the Steese Highway. In 1999, it crossed into Yukon for the first time in more than 50 years.

Student Internship Program Established with Ilisagvik College

After years of planning, the Ilisagvik College in Barrow and the Northern Field Office has established a student intern program. The goal is to educate Ilisagvik resource students about BLM programs and operations. The first student intern, Doreen Lampe, is a planner with the Planning Department of the North Slope Borough.

Lampe's internship recently began with hands-on training at NFO in Fairbanks. She has been shadowing NFO employees and attending public meetings of the Resource Advisory Council in Fairbanks and the Western Arctic Caribou Working Team in Kotzebue.

During her visit to Anchorage in April, Lampe was mentored by Native liaison **Brenda Takes Horse** who accompanied Lampe back to Washington D.C. for an overview of BLM headquarters.

The Fortymile Caribou Management Planning Team is comprised of representation from:

- Animal Welfare
- Northern Alaska Environmental Center
- Tanacross Village Council
- Tanana Chiefs Conference
- Tanana Valley Sportsmen's Association
- Alaska Wilderness Recreation & Tourism Association
- Dawson First Nation, Yukon
- Alaska Fish and Game Advisory Committee members from Delta, Eagle, Fairbanks, Upper Tanana/ Fortymile
- Eastern Interior Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

- Alaska Dept. of Fish & Game/Subsistence, Fairbanks
- Alaska Dept. of Fish & Game/Wildlife Conservation, Tok
- Bureau of Land Management, Fairbanks
- National Park Service, Eagle
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Anchorage
- Yukon Department of Renewable Resources, Dawson



ANILCA:

Alaska National Conservation Lands Act

Curse or Blessing for BLM?

The following are excerpted remarks made by BLM Alaska State Director Fran Cherry at the recent Alaska Forum on the Environment on the topic of BLM and the 20th anniversary of Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). In part 1 below, the state director traces the origins for our current system of conservation units. In part 2, to follow in a future issue, he compares BLM programs of today to those of 20 years ago to answer his own question: Was ANILCA a curse or a blessing for BLM?

by Ed Bovy

Good afternoon, it could be argued that of all the federal land management agencies, BLM benefited the least from the passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). After all, BLM lost the most land while other agencies gained millions of acres. And, ANILCA gave BLM specific management responsibilities for the least number of conservation areas and rivers. That reasoning is too simple, because there is more to the story than who got to manage the most land.

From the BLMs point of view, the story is much more complex.

As you will see, our story is a story woven together from a number of seemingly unrelated events and competing uses, such as oil and subsistence, in something so incredible that parts of it sound more like a novel than historical fact.

Who would believe that a few lone geologists wandering the North Slope of Alaska in 1906 could be thought of as the genesis of all our world class parks and

conservation units that we have in Alaska today?

Yet in a way, that is what happened. Let's start with a man named Ernest deKoven Leffingwell. He wrote a U.S. Geological Survey report more than 70 years ago, now considered a classic, that described an ancient river that flowed 220 million years ago. The river deposited sand and gravel; later geologic movements of the earth changed the sand into porous rock and then created subterranean traps that could capture any migrating oil. Leffingwell's work, and that of geologic pioneers set the stage for the next chapter in our story, Alaska statehood.

In 1961, Alaska began getting serious about selecting its statehood entitlement. Remember, at this time most of Alaska was still managed by the BLM. Only the two national forests, a few refuges, and Denali, Katmai and Glacier Bay were designated for management by other agencies.

Bill Egan, the state's first governor, was perfectly happy to let the federal government carry the ball for oil and gas leasing. He felt it was better to bide time on state selections because the state received 90 percent of any federal lease revenues.

Then another twist of history intervened—the 1964 Alaska earthquake. Overnight, half the infrastructure of the fledgling state was wiped out. The state needed lots big money, fast, to rebuild. And now those who had been advocating a more aggressive state leasing program finally caught the governor's ear.

Another USGS employee

named George Gryc, who studied Leffingwell's work and that of other scientists, advised the state to select an area in the northeast corner of the arctic coast. It had the best potential for a major deposit of oil—you may have heard of it: the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge or ANWR.

They didn't get it, so instead Alaska picked another area just to the west. You've heard of it too: Prudhoe Bay.

In the meantime, Alaska Natives began to organize politically. By 1967, if you added up all the land claims made by various groups and organizations you would find that more land was claimed than even existed in the state! Things got so contentious that Secretary of the Interior Udall froze state land selections in 1967.

If this wasn't enough, just one year later, in 1968, Alaska was rocked with another earthquake, but this time it was an economic earthquake—the discovery of a world class oil field at Prudhoe Bay.

But there was no way to build a pipeline anywhere to the south until the Alaska Native land claims were settled. Numerous bills were introduced in Congress and finally, in 1971, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) passed and the biggest economic boom the state has ever known began.

Under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, the Alaska Natives received a final land entitlement and almost a billion dollars in cash. And Part 17, section D-2 said the federal government could select up to 80 million acres of nationally-significant lands for permanent federal management in the form of various conservation designations.

And so it was oil, not ANILCA, in a not-so-roundabout-way, that was the seed that grew into our parks and refuges and forests and monuments and scenic rivers we enjoy today.

Bovy is a public affairs specialist in the Alaska State Office.

Evans Challenges Employees To Achieve

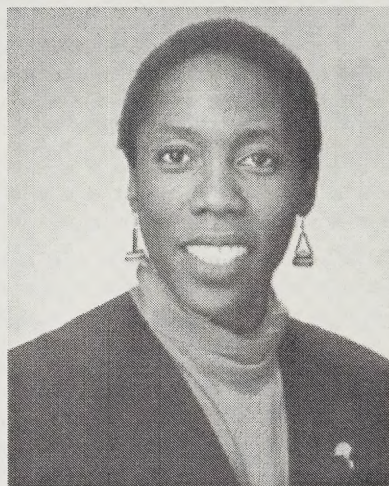
by Ella V. Wright

Are you in a box? Do you let others take your power away from you?

Melphine Evans, former senior vice president and chief financial officer for Alyeska Pipeline Service Company, says stop letting others dictate who you are. "Getting out of a box comes from knowing yourself," she said. She gave this advice during her motivational speech sponsored by the Federal Women's Program (FWP) last year.

"Do not let others define who you are," she said. Evaluate your own skills, analyze and challenge yourself to be all you can be. Don't let a supervisor put limits on what can accomplish. Set your goals high and when you reach them continue to set even higher goals.

If you want to be a corporate manager then talk like one, behave like one and dress like one. Dress to project an image that says you are confident, in control and



Melphine Evans

"smart." Find ways to bring your ideas and plans to the table, speak out.

Using herself as an example of a female executive in a male-dominated field, Evans says many times when a woman speaks up she is viewed as "too overbearing" to the opposite sex. Well-meaning co-workers have cautioned this self-proclaimed extrovert to stop being outspoken and stop showing her intelligence. However being a

"results-oriented executive" she ignores such advice.

She tries not to be slighted nor insulted when her male colleagues seemingly don't hear her suggestions or solutions to problems. When a male colleague is praised using her same words and ideas she will now congratulate him. She might say, "Gee, you've explained that idea so much better than I did."

Evans recommends mentors. "Mentoring is a strength that women have always had," she said. The paradigm shift is now for men to "mentor." Men used to call it "coaching" to get away from stressing the nurturing attributes usually associated with women.

"Find a support team," she said. She says that many men have an advantage over women in this area because many have played team sports and understand its value as a support group.

"Women often feel that they must know everything before applying for a job or promotion. In many cases males apply for jobs with far less qualifications than are required. They will bluff long enough until they finally learn the job by doing the job," says Evans.

Wright is a writer-editor for Support Services.

Health



Dirty Hands and Phones—Not a Good Mix

Research from the University of Arizona indicates the handling of a telephone is the easiest way to pass disease in the home or office. A recent university study revealed that up to two-thirds of the germs on a phone can be transmitted to the next person handling the phone receiver. Public telephones are a good source of stomach bugs and colds.

The study team focused on two organisms found on dirty phones — a bacterium called *Serratia rubidea* which is similar to *Shigella* and *E.coli*, both which can cause stomach upsets and a

bacterial virus called PRD-1. Phone receivers were contaminated with the microbes and studied how many were transferred by hand.

About 39 per cent of bacteria and 66 percent of the viruses were passed from the phone. Once the germs are on a hand, they spread quickly. If a contaminated fingertip touches a lower lip, 34 per cent of the *Serratia rubidea* and significant numbers of the PRD-1 virus are transferred into the mouth.

**Source—Biology Learning Centre
University of Arizona**



Jim Herriges and his dog, Buoy.

Biologist Gets Skijoring into World Championships

by Craig McCaa

It's probably easier to coordinate an international sporting event when you're not busy winning medals.

NFO wildlife biologist **Jim Herriges** did both at the Alyeska International Federation of Sleddog Sports Skijor and Pulka World Championships, held Feb. 27 to Mar. 1, 2001, at Birch Hill Recreation Area in Fairbanks. The event attracted more than 50 athletes from nine countries.

As co-chairman of the organizing committee, Herriges was instrumental in including skijoring in the world championships for the

first time. Skijoring is more popular in the United States than pulka racing, the traditional event in the world championships.

The two events are closely related. Pulka racing, more established in Scandinavian countries, includes a small, weighted sled between the dog(s) and the skier.

Herriges imagined only setting up the race courses and finding time-keepers. "Little did I know what I was getting us into," Herriges says now. Organizing the championships quickly expanded to include a myriad of tasks, from food concessions and medal ceremonies to web sites and t-shirt sales. In all, more than 70 volunteers helped make the championships a success.

Logistical challenges didn't seem to distract Herriges from also being a competitor. On the second day of the championships, Herriges took a silver medal in the Men's 23-kilometer Two-Dog Skijor. His second-place finish was impressive because one of his dogs, Buoy, had been ill and hadn't run in several weeks.

"It was obvious that Buoy wasn't 100 percent," Herriges says. "He wasn't feeling well but he did his best and hung in there. I was proud of both my dogs."

The following day Herriges won a bronze medal for the USA team in the 4 x 7.5km relay.

"We made skijoring a world championship event. ... this could be the first step toward establishing skijoring as an Olympic event," he says.

Herriges has served for two years as president of the Alaska Skijor and Pulk Association, which hosted the world championships. *McCaa is a geologist with the Northern Field Office.*



(l-r) Conveyances Kay Gumpert, Public Affairs Teresa McPherson, and Support Services Chris Pearson were Special Olympics spectators.

Special Olympics Draws BLM Volunteers

When the Special Olympics came to Anchorage in March, BLM did its part by providing 50 volunteers and 22 spectators for the weeklong event. Volunteers did everything from escorting athletes, driving Maria Shriver to recording scores at venues such as floor hockey, skiing and ice skating. **Dominica Van Koten** led the recruitment and coordination of volunteers at the

State Office, while **Lance Lockard** and **John Douts** did the same at the Campbell Tract facility. Lockard and Douts were also coordinators of the floor hockey venue at the Federal Express hanger involving hundreds of volunteers. **Teresa McPherson** recruited employees who served as spectators at the games.

Better Customer Service

Bertha King organizer of Human Resource's March 1 open house says HR held the event to let employees to know of their aim to improve customer service.

Throughout the afternoon, employees who dropped by the HR offices were led to information stations by paw prints. A dog theme was adopted since the Iditarod Sled Dog Race was being run during the same time. In the midst of stuffed dogs and a generous plates of appetizers, baked sweets and punch, employees could learn about insurance/retirement benefits, employee grievances, leave, and employee express.

FRONT PAGE, right corner—Margaret McDaniel and Chris Sitbon at the Special Olympics.



HR staff and guests— (l-r) Beth Hartt, Kathy Jarussi, Nancy Brainerd, Beth Deane, John Miller, Tammy Piner, Joy Edge, Sandie Wallace, Bertha King, Tim Godfrey, Joe Kurtak, Nancy Welch.

Alaska People

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